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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: EXTREMIST LEADER KILLED

REF: ABUJA 1398

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Anthony R. Eterno for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Mission Nigeria sources have confirmed that Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf died late July 30. Boko Haram is the Islamist extremist group that staged a four-day coordinated assault against police and government installations in four northeastern Nigerian states starting last weekend (reftel).

12. (C) The exact circumstances of Yusuf's death are very unclear. Local and international media report that Yusuf was killed after being handed over by the military to police custody. There are also reports that his body had been briefly put on display. However, reports from the GON claim that Yusuf's death resulted from a shoot-out with security forces in Maiduguri, Borno state. Deputy Inspector of Police Hamza Ahmadu elaborated on this point to VOA's Hausa Service, stating that "following reliable information, security personnel were led to the Yusuf's hideout, where an exchange of gun fire ensued and Mohammed Yusuf was among the people killed."

13. (SBU) Director of Defence Intelligence (DDI) Col. Mohammed Yerima, Nigeria Police Force Public Relations Director Emmanuel Ojukwu, and Assistant Director of Public Relations of the State Security Service (SSS) Marilyn Ogar confirmed Yusuf's death to a joint press conference on July 31 and defended the SSS's handling of Yusuf's case with a full account of its efforts against him dating back to 1995. Director Yerima noted the military's presence during the battles against Boko Haram, but stressed that "the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the country; it is only when the NPF is unable to contain the situation that the military might come in. The military cannot intervene or deploy unless so directed by the President of Nigeria, who having assessed the situation on the ground, directed the Chief of Defence Staff to take over the operation of restoring law and order in the affected states."

14. (C) Since Yusuf's death and that of some of his followers, there have been no reports of new clashes with the extremists. The governors of the four affected states have urged businesses, schools, and residents to resume normal activities. However, Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency Director of Planning Charles Agbo told Poloff on July 31 that the approximately 4,000 internally displaced persons

are still being sheltered at two army camps and one police headquarters because they "are not yet feeling comfortable to return home."

15. (S) Comment: Given the history of Nigerian security forces in dealing with militant opponents, especially those who have attacked GON forces, the GON will find it hard to refute allegations that Yusuf was killed in custody. There is considerable anecdotal evidence GON security sources have conveyed to RSO that Yusuf was badly beaten before being shot in the head. We will reiterate to Nigerians the importance of rule of law and the unacceptability of extrajudicial killings, though we doubt that many Nigerians will be troubled by the circumstances of Yusuf's demise. During a meeting with Ambassador, former president Jaukubu Gowon, a sophisticated moderate, rationalized Yusuf's possible extrajudicial execution as "understandable." Local scrutiny is likely to move on to whether Boko Haram has suffered the comprehensive military defeat that it has appeared to suffer following its attacks on government facilities, or whether Boko Haram remnants will be able to regroup one day to avenge the "martyred" Yusuf. End Comment.

16. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS